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ANALYSIS AS A METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY.

THE purpose of this paper is to examine the most recent attempt to apply the analytic method to the problems of philosophy. An attempt will be made to show that (I) the method cannot be applied for there are no means of doing it, and (II) the analytic method as applied to the problems of philosophy is involved in a circle.

I.

A consideration of the first question involves the neo-realistic theory of mind or consciousness; but it is necessary to select here, for there are about as many realistic theories of consciousness as there are writers on the subject. One of the most elaborate single treatments of the subject is to be found in Professor Holt's book, *The Concept of Consciousness*, and we shall use this for the purposes of the paper. Having determined the nature of consciousness as it is there treated, we shall ask the following questions: (*a*) Is consciousness such a thing, agency, or entity that it possesses the ability to perform an analytic operation, it being granted that such an operation can be performed by something? (*b*) If consciousness is not the agent of analysis, what is, it being granted that analysis is possible? (*c*) If consciousness is what Professor Holt says it is, why the detailed discussion of correspondence?

The aim of the book, as stated by the author, is to take "consciousness as a theme of discourse" and to make it "possible to frame a deductive system consisting of terms and propositions as premises, and themselves not 'conscious' nor made of 'ideal' stuff, such that the essential features of consciousness will follow as logical consequences."[1] The aim, stated otherwise, is to show how a neutral universe can contain both 'physical' and 'mental' objects. While the purpose is to derive mind from something that is not mind, the derived somewhat must contain such an entity or class of entities as we familiarly know under the name 'consciousness.'

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[1] *The Concept of Consciousness*, E. B. Holt, p. 86.

What kind of 'thing,' 'entity,' or 'class of entities' is consciousness? We find at least four characterizations of it which we present in summary form. Having shown that logical and mathematical concepts are objective, *i.e.*, that they are not *in* consciousness and do not in any way depend upon it for their being and nature, and that the secondary qualities are in the same status (which is termed 'neutral'), the way is open for the 'deduction' of consciousness—for finding among the neutral entities the knowledge relation.

Among the most simple of the entities in the 'neutral mosaic' are identity, difference, number, and the negative. Then follow in regular Comtian order the various mathematical and physical sciences, on through to biology, etc.; and about midway between the extremes from the simple to the complex, we find consciousness. That is to say, *consciousness is one of the complex entities in the 'neutral mosaic.'*

A second view of the nature of consciousness is presented in the figure of the searchlight. The searchlight illuminates a considerable expanse of the territory through which it passes. The expanse thus illuminated is analogous to expanses that are found in any manifold in which there is organic life. From this standpoint consciousness is said to be *the cross-section of the environment defined by the response of a nervous system;* or, consciousness is *the illuminated environment.*

It is evident that the apparatus of judgment, the means of carrying on an analytic process, have, from the first statement of the nature of consciousness, their loci in the world of 'neutral' entities; for consciousness is midway in the series from the simple to the complex. The means of judgment are in the light when the searchlight illuminates them by the reflection of its exploited powers, but they are there whether illuminated or not. In the same manner, it is asserted, does the nervous system select, and that which is selected is consciousness—trees, rivers, negatives, differences, quantity, to-the-right-of, and, in short, all things and relations. It is certainly difficult to understand the process by which these entities are discovered when they are themselves the very things which carry on the analytic process. It appears that the illuminated environment performs an operation on itself without any means for doing it, for the means are parts of itself, or better still, *are* itself, and that thereupon it makes the startling discovery that this same environment is made up of terms and propositions, universals and sense data, cross-sections and contours.

It will be noticed that, up to this point, consciousness has the distinction of occupying two different loci. In the 'generation' from the simple to the complex, it is found in the middle section in somewhat the same position as was occupied by the 'spirited element' in the Platonic psychology. On the one hand, consciousness is *in* the process, *is* one of the complex entities; on the other hand, there is something on the outside which *selects*, which *responds to* the environment. If this 'something' is not consciousness, it is set over against the 'neutral mosaic' and consequently has not been accounted for in the 'deduction'; and if it is consciousness, there is no difference between the position of Professor Holt and that of the defenders of 'mind' and 'soul.' In either case there is no place for analysis, for if consciousness is outside, set over against the environment, and if negatives, differences, quantities, aboves, etc., are *in* the 'mosaic,' the mind or consciousness has not even the means of beholding the logical spectacle as it plays before it. On the other hand, if consciousness is *in* the 'mosaic' and is identified with trees, rivers, furniture, relations, terms, and qualities, then arises the senseless question as to how an object, a tree for example, can analyze itself.

Then again, in addition to the two characterizations of its nature, *thought follows after the activity of neutral entities, this being the process of deduction, the logical process par excellence.* Of course, consciousness is already one of the entities in the 'neutral mosaic,' and is also a group of objects and relations confronted with the serious problem of agreement with 'reality,' and, in addition, is somehow associated with a nervous system which responds to something outside itself; but all this does not hinder its 'following' after the activity of propositions which unwind a universe. It would be a spectacle long to be remembered to behold the process which consists of a neutral entity which is itself active, being 'followed' in non-temporal time and non-spatial space by another entity under similar disabilities, when both neutral entities are the same thing. To behold an object eternally after itself in such a universe is a vision that rarely falls to the lot of a mortal man.

If consciousness is what the above accounts show it to be, why the detailed discussion of correspondence? We have at least two types of correspondence, namely, (*a*) correspondence of the content of the 'cross-section' and 'reality,' and (*b*) correspondence between the logical and mathematical entities or propositions and concrete real things. In the beginning of Professor Holt's discussion, he found that the logical and mathematical entities *are* reality, and that they, by their own activity, generate a universe; but later this world so generated is found to be too formal, and to be void of bone and blood. To secure content which was denied in the original, he has recourse to his doctrine of correspondence which is supposed to be 'acknowleged' by a mind or consciousness, and these realities turn out to be the very things which correspond.

We are informed that "nothing can represent a thing but the thing itself," yet we have the problem of the correspondence of the content of consciousness with 'reality.' Here we are told that the cross-section *is* consciousness, and that there is "no content of knowledge that is other than its object."[1] If this is true it is difficult to see the need of showing the relation between the 'cross-section' and 'reality.' If the self-activity of propositions generates a universe, *the* system of reality, the question of correspondence is senseless; and if it does not generate a real system it is useless and equally meaningless. The 'repetition of identicals' will not solve the problem, if the 'identicals' are not reality; and if they are reality, there is no problem of correspondence. "Our ideas are never completely identical with the objects," yet we are informed that there is "no content of knowledge that is other than its object." When we remember that consciousness is a cross-section of the environment defined by the response of a nervous system, and then again, that it is one of the entities in the series from the simple to the complex, generated by the activity of propositions and terms, we face, in the first case, the task of answering the meaningless question of how objects agree and disagree among themselves, and in the second case, of explaining in what way the theory of representation advanced by Professor Holt differs from that of his opponents whose theory is laughed out of court.

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 150.

When it is further remembered that consciousness is something that 'follows' the activity of propositions and terms, the mystery of correspondence grows deeper, for consciousness is 'following' something which has assigned to it the task of its own genesis. Worse still is the difficulty when consciousness is something that 'acknowledges' correspondence in the two senses above stated, for this makes of consciousness a *tertium quid*, whereas before we have witnessed it as the identical things which correspond. To define consciousness as an object or as objects, and then to ask how it happens that objects agree with themselves, and at the same time to assert that knowledge is never complete when knowledge is the object, is a procedure that starts not only analysis but any other logical process under unfavorable auspices.

Such a confusion as to the nature of consciousness which is (*a*) one of the complex entities in the 'neutral mosaic,' (*b*) a cross-section of the environment defined by the response of the nervous system, (*c*) something that 'follows' after the activity of neutral entities, and (*d*) something that 'acknowledges' correspondence, renders an analytic process impossible, for we are never certain as to what we are analyzing and the means for the performance of the operation go to make up a definition of the object which in turn is both the agent and patient.

II.

Our second question concerning analysis as a method of philosophy pertains to the circle involved in the discovery of elements or simples. To establish our objections we shall consider the three questions: (*a*) How are the elements or simples discovered? (*b*) What are they when they have been found? (*c*) What is (or can be) done with them?

Some realistic logicians accept the circle frankly,[1] while others commit the error in a more or less veiled form. They fail to accept it as does Couturat, who suggests that it is better to admit it in the beginning "without any idle logical vanity." An examination, however, will reveal it; and for our purposes Mr. Russell's *Scientific Method in Philosophy* will be used. The chapter, "Our Knowledge of the External World," not only affords information as to what is the real, the elemental, but is also an application of the logico-analytic method.

The process in the discovery of simples consists in the taking of data which are the common sense things of the world, such as trees, furniture, nature, and history, and performing an operation known as *internal scrutiny*. This method or process of internal scrutiny leads to elements which are known as 'hard' data and 'soft' data, the difference between them being also a datum. While certain alliances between psychology and logic render it difficult to distinguish between the two kinds of data, and while unconscious inferences enter to cloud a sharp distinction between the psychological and the logical, it is highly essential that logical 'primitives' be deduced from psychological 'primitives.' Internal scrutiny, in short, reveals (*a*) our common knowledge, (*b*) degrees of certainty, and (*c*) primitive and derivative knowledge. The 'hard' data are those which resist the "solvent influence of reflection," and are of two kinds, namely, the facts of sense and the laws of logic. The facts of sense are *our own sense data*, for it is not possible to admit the existence of other minds as a 'hard' datum, and it is highly essential that the world be constructed from 'hard' data only. All the 'hard' data are subjective, they are *mine*, they are Berkleyan.

This seems to be the terminus of the process of internal scrutiny or analysis, and the question arises, What can be done with the data, or as Mr. Russell states it: "Can the existence of any other than our own hard data be inferred from the existence of those data?" Then begins the process of building up a world from the elements which analysis has revealed, that is, from the 'hard' data. Beginning with the stock example of the philosopher, Mr. Russell says: "A table viewed from one place presents a different appearance from that which it presents from another place. This is the language of common sense but this language already assumes that there is a real table of which we see the appearances."[1] Mr. Russell rightly admits that such a statement begs the whole issue, and insists that we must state the facts in terms of what we know, namely, our sense data; and to this end he says: "What is really known is a correlation of muscular and other bodily sensations with changes in visual sensations." But since sensation is the awareness of an object, and not the object, it seems difficult to get anything from our own hard sense data, and to find objectivity Mr. Russell has recourse to a "model hypothesis" as an "aid to the imagination."[2] By the aid of the model we proceed as follows: Suppose each mind looks out on a world from a point of view peculiar to itself. (Of course it is understood that we do not know anything about other minds.) Then suppose that each of these perceived worlds exists precisely as it is perceived. Then the system of worlds perceived and unperceived, we call the system of "perspectives." By a correlation of similars between things in one perspective and those of another, we reach a system of points in space, that is, in "public space," which cannot be perceived, but is known as an inference.

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[1] *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Vol. I, p. 138.

Space is thus rendered continuous as a relation between perspectives. The momentary common sense thing can thus be defined: "Given an object in one perspective, from the system of all the objects correlated with it in all the perspectives; that system may be identified with the momentary common sense thing. Thus the aspect of a 'thing' is a member of a system of aspects which *is* the 'thing' at that moment. All the aspects of a thing are real, whereas the thing is a mere logical construction."[1]

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

[2] It is highly significant that Mr. Russell has recourse to the "model hypothesis." It indicates the indispensability of a process which many of the realists hold in light esteem.

It is asserted, too, that the canons by which our common knowledge has been obtained are assumed, but they are applied a little more carefully. But we must note that this common knowledge, these common data such as nature, history, etc., are all called in question. They are certainly not 'real' reality, or no question concerning them or reality either would ever have arisen. Mr. Russell calls in question our common knowledge, but he assumes the canons by which it was established in order to call it in question and criticize it. Of course a beginning must be made somewhere, but our point is the legitimacy of calling in question the whole body of our common knowledge, and all the while assuming as a valid principle of criticism the very canons by which this erroneous knowledge was established. The procedure consists in showing that after we have learned a great deal about the external world we can then show, on the basis of the canons by which this knowledge was gained, that such knowledge is not real, or of the real, but belongs to the activity of propositions connected with 'soft' data.

Scrutiny, it is asserted, reveals as 'hard' data the facts of sense. These data are obtained from the world of common sense which is not the real world; if this were the real world, no problem concerning it would have arisen. Having discovered the 'hard' data by reflection on this unreal world of common sense, the problem that next arises is to construct from these 'hard' data a world. The world so constructed cannot be the common sense world, provided, that is, it is to be the *real* world, for this is the world that has already been thrown aside as non-real. If the common sense world is the real world, one which is already constructed, why destroy it and *build another out of the data which the torn down world showed by analysis that it possesses?* Is it not necessary that the reconstructed world shall be precisely the world of common sense with which the realist starts? If this is the case, his labor has been in vain; and if not, the data out of which he hopes to construct a new heaven and a new earth are not the *real* data, for they have been obtained from the non-real world of common sense. In the first case he has performed a lengthy bit of labor to get what he had to begin with; and in the second, to the construction of a world which not even a realist could recognize, for it has been made from unreal data or elements.

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

"Can the existence of any thing other than our own hard data be inferred from the existence of those data?" In view of the method employed in reaching 'hard' data, it is difficult to see how this question could be asked seriously. We have but to remember that the whole world of common sense was taken as existing to get the problem started at all. 'Hard' data were *found* by an examination of nature and history, and now to ask whether anything can be inferred to exist from the existence of those elements which were made possible only on the ground of the existence of the former world is, as Professor Bode says, "an unwarranted abuse of our good nature." After the analysis, it is asserted that all we know is our own 'hard' data; but before the analysis, common sense speaks of tables and chairs, of nature and history. And just so does the philosopher, in order to speak of 'points of view,' and in order to have material upon which to work. But the realist admits that we may speak of visual sensations, correlations, muscular sensations; and at the same time he tells us that sensations are the *awareness* of an object, and not the object. The experience of seeing a color, for example, is found by analysis to be a complex of at least two elements, namely, *the color or the sensible object and the awareness or the sensation.*[1] Thus by the realist's own account "our own hard data" imply the existence of objects.

In all of Mr. Russell's discussions he takes a permanent thing, a penny for example, to show that this same penny is a series of aspects. But this surely begs the question, as Mr. Russell himself admits in his treatment of the common sense 'table.' We have the penny to begin with, and to define it as a series of aspects is one way to treat a given object, and not the way to construct an object if none were given to generate the question or to make the discussion possible.

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

Consequently, the analytic method as the realist treats it cannot be applied, for there are no means for doing it, because: (*a*) the means are the objects or entities to be analyzed; (*b*) the means is a bare entity whose powers are a definition of the object; (*c*) the means is an empty shell which 'follows' the process of reality; (*d*) the means is an exploited outsider which merely 'acknowledges.' And also, the analytic method as applied to the problems of philosophy is involved in a circle, because:

(*a*) It takes for granted the existence and reality of the common sense world to get the problem started;

(*b*) It denies the *real* reality of the common sense world, but it assumes the genuineness of the canons by which the knowledge of the non-real world was built up;

(*c*) It leads to my own sense data from which nothing can be inferred, yet the realist asserts that sensation itself implies the existence of objects;

(*d*) It leads to this dilemma: Either the common sense world which was taken for granted to get the discussion started and which furnished the data from which the simple and ultimate data were derived, is the real world, and hence the analytic process is a failure, for the realist had in the beginning precisely what he was looking for, namely, reality, or the real world; or the common sense world is not the real world, in which case the data which were employed in reaching the ultimate data are not real, and hence the world constructed from these ultimate data is an unreal world;

(*e*) It is impossible, as the examples chosen from Mr. Russell indicate, to carry on his arguments at all without answering in the affirmative his own question: "Can the existence of any other than our own hard data be inferred from the existence of those data?"

If the above criticisms are valid, it is evident that the realist must give such an account of consciousness as will make possible the application of his method, that of analysis; and also that, in the actual analytic process, he give such an account of the nature of reality as will avoid the evident *petitio*.

H. E. CUNNINGHAM.

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA.